

## With New Beginnings, your congregation will:

- Receive a comprehensive report of strengths and challenges, as well as a realistic picture of possible future directions.
- Be trained in a discernment process to follow God's lead in choosing a new direction.
- Discover available ministry opportunities in the community.
- Learn how to discuss and implement change in a healthy, open manner.
- Leaders receive additional training on leading through change.
- Set a course for future strategic and visionary ministry planning.

New Beginnings does not force change on a congregation. It provides the information, the process, and the training to help members and leaders come together to make wise and realistic decisions about the future.

**New Beginnings helps churches choose their future, instead of letting it get chosen for them.**

New Beginnings assesses a congregation's strengths and challenges as it seeks to redevelop its ministry. The goal of the process is to put the congregation on the road to sustainable Christian witness and action within its community.

The New Beginnings assessment and follow-up training give your church's leaders and members a realistic picture of your resources for ministry, demographic strengths, readiness for change, and potential for vital ministry.

**"I am about to do  
a new thing; now it  
springs forth, do you  
not perceive it?"**

- Isaiah 43:19

## How does the process work, and how long does it take?

The process usually takes six to eight months. Phase I is an on-site assessment: building inspection, financial review, tour of the community, and meeting with the pastor and moderator. The assessment includes an Appreciative Inquiry session with congregational leaders to learn more about your strengths. After the assessment, your congregation will receive a report outlining congregational strengths, weaknesses and possible future directions.

In Phase II, we'll train five to eight key leaders within your church to interpret the report, and prepare them to guide the congregation through a discernment process. Pastors will participate in an additional training called "Leading Change in Congregations."

In Phase III, your key leaders will conduct small group meetings, moving the congregation toward a "big picture" decision about what God is calling the church to do and be. Once that decision is made, New Beginnings will refer the pastor and leaders to available mission planning resources to help your congregation "connect the dots."



Mainline Protestant churches everywhere are declining. The pews are emptier on Sunday morning. Neighborhoods have changed. Once-proud buildings show signs of wear and tear, and the cost to maintain them pulls money away from outreach and ministry.

Decline does not necessarily mean your congregation will close. But the old mission and vision – the one that worked 30, 50, or even 100 years ago – no longer fits your circumstances. It may be time to ask, “What is God calling us to do and to be in this time and this place?”

If your congregation can answer “yes” to three or more of the following, it may be time for a New Beginning:

- Less than 70 in worship, or more than 70 in worship but significant decline for a decade
- Wrestling with future vision for the church
- Significant building issues
- Aging membership
- Changing neighborhood
- Trouble paying bills and/or paying off a loan
- Currently in interim time of transition

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**UNITED CHURCH  
OF CHRIST**



**What is the cost?** The fee for a group of United Church of Christ congregations in an area or conference is \$2,800 for each congregation. Congregations may opt for an individual customized New Beginnings assessment. The fee for the customized service is \$3,800.

**How do we get started?** Contact your conference to speak with them about sponsoring the New Beginnings Assessment program in your region. Or call the Congregational Assessment, Support and Advancement Ministry of the United Church of Christ toll free at **866.822.8224 ext. 3837** or **newbeginnings@ucc.org**. Learn more at **www.ucc.org/new-beginnings**

### Who is New Beginnings?

New Beginnings is a program developed by our denominational partner, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Local Church Ministries, United Church of Christ has bought a license to use the New Beginnings program among our congregations and conferences.

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## New Beginnings Assessment Service

seeks to answer the question,

“What is God calling your congregation to do and be in this time and this place?”

